

TOLERANCE IN ISLAM

By
Dr. Hifz ur Rehman *

Intolerance is on the increase in the world today, causing death, genocide, violence, religious persecution as well as confrontations on different levels. Some times it is racial and ethnic, some times it is religious and ideological, other times it is political and social. In every situation it is evil and painful. How can we solve the problem of intolerance? How can we assert our own beliefs and positions without being intolerant to others? How can we bring tolerance into the world today?

I would like to discuss some of these issues from an Islamic point of view.

What is tolerance? Literally the word "tolerance" means "to bear." As a concept it means "respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of the world's cultures, forms of expression and ways of being human." In Arabic it is called "Tasamuh" تسامح. There are also other words that give similar meanings, such as "Hilm" حلم (forbearance) or "'Afu" عفو (pardon, forgiveness) or "Safh" صفح (overlooking, disregarding). In the Persian and Urdu languages, we use the word "rawadari" which comes from "rawa" meaning "acceptable or bearable" and "dashtan" meaning "to hold". Thus it means to hold something acceptable or bearable.

Tolerance is a basic principle of Islam. It is a religious moral duty. It does not mean "concession, condescension or indulgence." It does not mean lack of principles, or lack of seriousness about one's principles.

* Government Garden College Rawalpindi.

Sometimes it is said, "People are tolerant of things that they do not care about." But this is not the case in Islam. Tolerance according to Islam does not mean that we believe that all religions are the same. It does not mean that we do not believe in the supremacy of Islam over other faiths and ideologies. It does not mean that we do not convey the message of Islam to others and do not wish them to become Muslims.

The UNESCO principles on tolerance say:

"Consistent with respect for human rights, the practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behavior and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others."

Tolerance Comes From Our Recognition of:

1. The dignity of the human beings,
2. The basic equality of all human beings,
3. Universal human rights, and
4. Fundamental freedom of thought, conscience and belief.

The Qur'an speaks about the basic dignity of all human beings. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, spoke about the equality of all human beings, regardless of their race, color, language or ethnic background. Shari`ah recognizes the rights of all people to life, property, family, honor and conscience.

The terrorist attacks on New York City and the Pentagon have focused public attention on the state of Muslim theology. For most Americans, the utter indifference to the value of human life and the unmitigated hostility to the United States shown by some Muslims came as a great shock. Others were confirmed in their belief that we face a great struggle between civilizations. Islamic values, they say, are fundamentally at odds with Western liberal values. The terrorist attacks

are symptomatic of a clash between Judeo-Christian civilization, with its values of individual freedom, pluralism, and secularism, and an amoral, un-Westernized, so-called "authentic Islam." Indeed, Islamic civilization is associated with the ideas of collective rights, individual duties, legalism, despotism, and intolerance that we associated with our former civilizational rival, the Soviet bloc. We seem to project onto the other everything we like to think that we are not.

This intellectual trap is easy to fall into when we deal with the theology of Osama Bin Laden, the Taliban, the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia, and the Jihad organizations. The theologically-based attitudes of these Muslim puritans are fundamentally at odds not only with a Western way of life, but also with the very idea of an international society or the notion of universal human values. They display an intolerant exclusiveness, and a belligerent sense of supremacy vis-à-vis the other. According to their theologies, Islam is the only way of life, and must be pursued regardless of its impact on the rights and well-being of others. The straight path (al-sirat al-mustaqim **الصراط المستقيم**) is fixed, they say, by a system of Divine laws (shari-ah) that trump any moral considerations or ethical values that are not fully codified in the law. God is manifested through a set of determinate legal commands that specify the right way to act in virtually all circumstances. The sole purpose of human life on earth is to realize the Divine manifestation by dutifully and faithfully implementing God's law. Morality itself begins and ends in the mechanics and technicalities of Islamic law (though different schools of Islamic law understand the content of those laws differently).

A life devoted to compliance with this legal code is considered inherently superior to all others, and the followers of any other way are considered either infidels (kuffar **كفر**), hypocrites (munafiqun **منافقون**), or iniquitous (fasiqun **فاسقون**). Anchored in the security and assuredness of a determinable law, it becomes fairly easy to differentiate between the rightly-guided and the misguided. The rightly-guided obey the law; the misguided either deny, attempt to dilute, or argue about the law. Naturally, the rightly-guided are superior because they have God on their side. The Muslim puritans imagine that God's perfection and immutability

are fully attainable on earth—as if God's perfection had been deposited in the Divine law, and, by giving effect to this law, we could create a social order that mirrors Divine Truth. By attaching themselves to the Supreme Being, puritan groups are able to claim a self-righteous perfectionism that easily slips into a pretense of supremacy.

Islam emphasizes the establishment of equality and justice, both of these values cannot be established without some degree of tolerance. Islam recognized from the very beginning the principle of freedom of belief or freedom of religion. It said very clearly that it is not allowed to have any coercion in the matters of faith and belief. The Qur'an says,:

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ﴾

"There is no compulsion in religion."¹

If in the matters of religion, coercion is not permissible, then by implication one can say that in other matters of cultures and other worldly practices it is also not acceptable. In Surat Ash-Shura Allah says to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, "If then they turn away, We have not sent you as a guard over them. Your duty is but to convey (the Message)..."

﴿فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا إِنْ عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ﴾²

In another place Allah says, "Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. Your Lord knows best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance."³

﴿ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ﴾ (١٢٥)

¹ - Al-Baqarah:256.

² - Ash-Shura: 48

³ - An-Nahl:125

Further, Allah says to the Believers, "Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and beware (of evil): if you do turn back, know then that it is Our Messenger's duty to proclaim (the Message) in the clearest manner."¹

﴿وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَاحْذَرُوا فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ﴾ (٩٢)

One can also cite Allah's words: "Say: 'Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger: but if you turn away, he is only responsible for the duty placed on him and you for that placed on you. If you obey him, you shall be on right guidance. The Messenger's duty is only to preach the clear (Message)'"².

﴿قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حُمِّلْتُمْ وَإِن تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ﴾ (٥٤)

All these verses give note that Muslims do not coerce people; they must present the message to them in the most cogent and clear way, invite them to the truth and do their best in presenting and conveying the message of God to humanity, but it is up to people to accept or not to accept. Allah says, "And say, 'The truth is from your Lord, so whosoever wants let him believe and whosoever wants let him deny.'"³

﴿فَادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا فَلَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ﴾ (٢٩)

The question then comes: If Allah gave choice to believe or not to believe, then why did He punish the people of Prophet Nuh, the `Ad, the Thamud, the people of Prophet Lut, the people of Prophet Shu`aib and

¹- Al-Ma'idah: 92

²- An-Nur:54

³- An-Nahl:29

Pharaoh and his followers? The answer is in the Qur'an itself. Those people were not punished simply because of their disbelief. They were punished because they had become oppressors. They committed aggression against the righteous, and stopped others to come to the way of Allah. There were many in the world who denied Allah, but Allah did not punish every one. Ibn Taymiyah, the outstanding Muslim scholar, said, "The states may live long inspite of their people's unbelief (kufr), but they cannot live long when their people become oppressors."

Another question is raised about Jihad. Some people say, "Is it not the duty of Muslims to make Jihad?" But the purpose of Jihad is not to convert people to Islam. Allah says, ﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ﴾¹

"No compulsion in religion." The real purpose of Jihad is to remove injustice and aggression. Muslims are allowed to keep good relations with non-Muslims. Allah says, "Allah does not forbid you that you show kindness and deal justly with those who did not fight you in your religion and did not drive you out from your homes..."²

﴿لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ﴾

Islam teaches that fighting is only against those who fight. Allah says, "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loves not transgressors."³

﴿وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ﴾

Islam may tolerate anything, but it teaches zero tolerance for injustice, oppression, and violation of the rights of other human beings.

¹- Al-Baqarah:256

²- Al-Mumtahinah: 8

³- Al-Baqarah:190.

Allah says, "And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children, whose cry is: 'Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from Yourside one who will protect; and raise for us from Your side one who will help!'"¹

﴿وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا﴾

Islam teaches tolerance on all levels: individual, groups and states. It should be a political and legal requirement. Tolerance is the mechanism that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), and the rule of law. The Qur'an says very clearly: "To every People have We appointed rites and ceremonies which they must follow, let them not then dispute with you on the matter, but do invite (them) to your Lord: for you are assuredly on the Right Way. If they do wrangle with you, say, 'God knows best what it is you are doing.' 'God will judge between you on the Day of Judgment concerning the matters in which you differ.'" ²

﴿اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٦٩) أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (٧٠) وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَنْزَلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَمَا لَيْسَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ نَصِيرٍ (٧١) وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٌ تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْمُنْكَرَ يَكَادُونَ يَسْطُونَ بِالَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتَنَا قُلْ أَفَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِّنْ ذَلِكَُمُ النَّارُ وَعَدَهَا اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (٧٢)﴾

¹ - An-Nisa': 75.

² - Al-Hajj: 76-69.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضَرْبَ مَثَلٍ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمْ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَّا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ (٧٣) مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ (٧٤) يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٧٥﴾

There are many levels of tolerance:

- A. Between family members, between husband and wife, between parents and children, between siblings etc.
- B. Tolerance between the members of the community: tolerance in views and opinions, tolerance between the Madhahib (Islamic Juristic Schools).
- C. Tolerance between Muslims and the people of other faiths (interfaith relations, dialogue and cooperation).

Muslims have been generally very tolerant people. We must emphasize this virtue among us and in the world today. Tolerance is needed among our communities: We must foster tolerance through deliberate policies and efforts. Our centers should be multi-ethnic. We should teach our children respect of each other. We should not generalize about other races and cultures. We should have more exchange visits and meetings with each other. Even marriages should be encouraged among Muslims of different ethnic groups.

With non-Muslims we should have dialogue and good relations, but we cannot accept things that are contrary to our religion. We should inform them what is acceptable to us and what is not. With more information, I am sure the respect will develop and more cooperation will develop.

In the eyes of history, religious toleration is the highest evidence of culture in a people. It was not until the Western nations broke away from their religious law that they became more tolerant, and it was only when

the Muslims fell away from their religious law that they declined in tolerance and other evidences of the highest culture. Before the coming of Islam, tolerance had never been preached as an essential part of religion.

If Europe had known as much of Islam, as Muslims knew of Christendom, in those days, those mad, adventurous, occasionally chivalrous and heroic, but utterly fanatical outbreak known as the Crusades could not have taken place, for they were based on a complete misapprehension.

Innumerable monasteries, with a wealth of treasure of which the worth has been calculated at not less than a hundred millions sterling, enjoyed the benefit of the Holy Prophet's (Muhammad's) Charter to the monks of Sinai and were religiously respected by the Muslims. The various sects of Christians were represented in the Council of the Empire by their patriarchs, on the provincial and district council by their bishops, in the village council by their priests, whose word was always taken without question on things which were the sole concern of their community.

The tolerance within the body of Islam was, and is, something without parallel in history; class and race and color ceasing altogether to be barriers.

One of the commonest charges brought against Islam historically, and as a religion, by Western writers is that it is intolerant. This is turning the tables with a vengeance when one remembers various facts: One remembers that not a Muslim is left alive in Spain or Sicily or Apulia. One remembers that not a Muslim was left alive and not a mosque left standing in Greece after the great rebellion in 1821. One remembers how the Muslims of the Balkan peninsula, once the majority, have been systematically reduced with the approval of the whole of Europe, how the Christian under Muslim rule have in recent times been urged on to rebel and massacre the Muslims, and how reprisals by the latter have been condemned as quite uncalled for.

In Spain under the Umayyads and in Baghdad under the Abbasid Khalifas, Christians and Jews, equally with Muslims, were admitted to the Schools and universities - not only that, but were boarded and lodged in

hostels at the cost of the state. When the Moors were driven out of Spain, the Christian conquerors held a terrific persecution of the Jews. Those who were fortunate enough to escape fled, some of them to Morocco and many hundreds to the Turkish empire, where their descendants still live in separate communities, and still speak among themselves an antiquated form of Spanish. The Muslim empire was a refuge for all those who fled from persecution by the Inquisition.

The Western Christians, till the arrival of the Encyclopaedists in the eighteenth century, did not know and did not care to know, what the Muslim believed, nor did the Western Christian seek to know the views of Eastern Christians with regard to them. The Christian Church was already split in two, and in the end, it came to such a pass that the Eastern Christians, as Gibbon shows, preferred Muslim rule, which allowed them to practice their own form of religion and adhere to their peculiar dogmas, to the rule of fellow Christians who would have made them Roman Catholics or wiped them out.

The Western Christians called the Muslims pagans, paynims, even idolaters - there are plenty of books in which they are described as worshipping an idol called Mahomet or Mahound, and in the accounts of the conquest of Granada there are even descriptions of the monstrous idols which they were alleged to worship - whereas the Muslims knew what Christianity was, and in what respects it differed from Islam. If Europe had known as much of Islam, as Muslims knew of Christendom, in those days, those mad, adventurous, occasionally chivalrous and heroic, but utterly fanatical outbreak known as the Crusades could not have taken place, for they were based on a complete misapprehension. **I quote a learned French author:**

"Every poet in Christendom considered a Mohammedan to be an infidel, and an idolater, and his gods to be three; mentioned in order, they were: Mahomet or Mahound or Mohammad, Opolane and the third Termogond. It was said that when in Spain the Christians overpowered the Mohammadans and drove them as far as the gates of the city of Saragossa, the Mohammadans went back and broke their idols.

"A Christian poet of the period says that Opolane the "god" of the Mohammadans, which was kept there in a den was awfully belabored and abused by the Mohammadans, who, binding it hand and foot, crucified it on a pillar, trampled it under their feet and broke it to pieces by beating it with sticks; that their second god Mahound they threw in a pit and caused to be torn to pieces by pigs and dogs, and that never were gods so ignominiously treated; but that afterwards the Mohammadans repented of their sins, and once more reinstated their gods for the accustomed worship, and that when the Emperor Charles entered the city of Saragossa he had every mosque in the city searched and had "Muhammad" and all their Gods broken with iron hammers."

That was the kind of "history" on which the populace in Western Europe used to be fed. Those were the ideas which inspired the rank and file of the crusader in their attacks on the most civilized peoples of those days. Christendom regarded the outside world as damned eternally, and Islam did not. There were good and tender-hearted men in Christendom who thought it sad that any people should be damned eternally, and wished to save them by the only way they knew - conversion to the Christian faith.

It was not until the Western nations broke away from their religious law that they became more tolerant; and it was only when the Muslims fell away from their religious law that they declined in tolerance and other evidences of the highest culture. Therefore the difference evident in that anecdote is not of manners only but of religion. Of old, tolerance had existed here and there in the world, among enlightened individuals; but those individuals had always been against the prevalent religion. Tolerance was regarded of un-religious, if not irreligious. Before the coming of Islam it had never been preached as an essential part of religion.

For the Muslims, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are but three forms of one religion, which, in its original purity, was the religion of Abraham: Al-Islam, that perfect **Self-Surrender** to the Will of God, which is the basis of Theocracy. The Jews, in their religion, after Moses, limited God's

mercy to their chosen nation and thought of His kingdom as the dominion of their race.

Even Christ himself, as several of his sayings show, declared that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel and seemed to regard his mission as to the Hebrews only; and it was only after a special vision vouchsafed to St. Peter that his followers in after days considered themselves authorized to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. The Christians limited God's mercy to those who believed certain dogmas. Every one who failed to hold the dogmas was an outcast or a miscreant, to be persecuted for his or her soul's good. In Islam only is manifest the real nature of the Kingdom of God.

The two verses

﴿اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سَنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ (٥٥) لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾¹

Are supplementary. Where there is that realization of the majesty and dominion of **Allah** (سبحانه وتعالى), there is no compulsion in religion. Men choose their path - allegiance or opposition - and it is sufficient punishment for those who oppose that they draw further and further away from the light of truth.

What Muslims do not generally consider is that this law applies to our own community just as much as to the folk outside, the laws of Allah

¹- Sura Baqarh 255, 256.

being universal; and that intolerance of Muslims for other men's opinions and beliefs is evidence that they themselves have, at the moment, forgotten the vision of the majesty and mercy of Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) which the Qur'an presents to them.

In the Qur'an I find two meanings (of a Kafir), which become one the moment that we try to realize the divine standpoint. The Kafir in the first place, is not the follower of any religion. He is the opponent of Allah's benevolent will and purpose for mankind-therefore the disbeliever in the truth of all religions, the disbeliever in all Scriptures as of divine revelation, the disbeliever to the point of active opposition in all the Prophets (عليهم السلام) whom the Muslims are bidden to regard, without distinction, as **messengers of Allah**.

The Qur'an repeatedly claims to be the confirmation of the truth of all religions. The former Scriptures had become obscure, the former Prophets appeared mythical, so extravagant were the legends which were told concerning them, so that people doubted whether there was any truth in the old Scriptures, whether such people as the Prophets had ever really existed. Here - says the Qur'an - is a Scripture whereof there is no doubt: here is a Prophet actually living among you and preaching to you. If it were not for this book and this Prophet, men might be excused for saying that Allah's guidance to mankind was all a fable. This book and this Prophet, therefore, confirm the truth of all that was revealed before them, and those who disbelieve in them to the point of opposing the existence of a Prophet and a revelation are really opposed to the idea of Allah's guidance - which is the truth of all revealed religions. Our Holy Prophet (pbuh) himself said that the term Kafir was not to be applied to anyone who said "Salam" (peace) to the Muslims. The Kafirs, in the terms of the Qur'an, are the conscious evil-doers of any race of creed or community.

I have made a long digression but it seemed to me necessary, for I find much confusion of ideas even among Muslims on this subject, owing to defective study of the Qur'an and the Prophet's life. Many Muslims seem to forget that our Prophet had allies among the idolaters even after Islam had triumphed in Arabia, and that he "fulfilled his treaty with them

perfectly until the term thereof." The righteous conduct of the Muslims, not the sword, must be held responsible for the conversion of those idolaters, since they embraced Islam before the expiration of their treaty.

So much for the idolaters of Arabia, who had no real beliefs to oppose the teaching of Islam, but only superstition. They invoked their local deities for help in war and put their faith only in brute force. In this they were, to begin with, enormously superior to the Muslims. When the Muslims nevertheless won, they were dismayed; and all their arguments based on the superior power of their deities were for ever silenced. Their conversion followed naturally. It was only a question of time with the most obstinate of them.

It was otherwise with the people who had a respectable religion of their own - the **People of the Scripture** - as the Qur'an calls them - i.e., the people who had received the revelation of some former Prophet: the Jews, the Christians and the Zoroastrians were those with whom the Muslims came at once in contact. To these our Prophet's attitude was all of kindness. The Charter which he granted to the Christian monks of Sinai is extant. If you read it you will see that it breathes not only goodwill but actual love. He gave to the Jews of Medina, so long as they were faithful to him, precisely the same treatment as to the Muslims. He never was aggressive against any man or class of men; he never penalized any man, or made war on any people, on the ground of belief but only on the ground of conduct.

The story of his reception of Christian and Zoroastrian visitors is on record. There is not a trace of religious intolerance in all this. And it should be remembered - Muslims are rather apt to forget it, and it is of great importance to our outlook - that our Prophet did not ask the people of the Scripture to become his followers. He asked them only to accept the Kingdom of Allah, to abolish priesthood and restore their own religions to their original purity. The question which, in effect, he put to everyone was this: **"Are you for the Kingdom of God which includes all of us, or are you for your own community against the rest of mankind?"** The one is obviously the way of peace and human progress, the other the way of strife, oppression and calamity. But the rulers of the world, to

whom he sent his message, most of them treated it as the message of either an insolent upstart or a mad fanatic. **His envoys were insulted cruelly, and even slain. One cannot help wondering what reception that same embassy would meet with from the rulers of mankind today,** when all the thinking portion of mankind accept the Prophet's premises, have thrown off the trammels of priestcraft, and harbor some idea of human brotherhood.

But though the Christians and Jews and Zoroastrians refused his message, and their rulers heaped most cruel insults on his envoys, our Prophet never lost his benevolent attitudes towards them as religious communities; as witness the **Charter to the monks of Sinai** already mentioned. And though the Muslims of later days have fallen far short of the Holy Prophet's tolerance, and have sometimes shown arrogance towards men of other faiths, **they have always given special treatment to the Jews and Christians. Indeed the Laws for their special treatment form part of the Shari'ah.**

In Egypt the Copts were on terms of closest friendship with the Muslims in the first centuries of the Muslim conquest, and they are on terms at closest friendship with the Muslims at the present day. In Syria the various Christian communities lived on terms of closest friendship with the Muslims in the first centuries of the Muslim conquest, and they are on terms of closest friendship with the Muslims at the present day, openly preferring Muslim domination to a foreign yoke....

From the expulsion of the Moriscos dates the degradation and decline of Spain. San Fernando was really wiser and more patriotic in his tolerance to conquered Seville, Murcia and Toledo than was the later king who, under the guise of Holy warfare, captured Grenada and let the Inquisition work its will upon the Muslims and the Jews. And the modern Balkan States and Greece are born under a curse. **It may even prove that the degradation and decline of European civilization will be dated from the day when so-called civilized statesmen agreed to the inhuman policy of Czarist Russia and gave their sanction to the crude fanaticism of the Russian Church.**

There is no doubt but that, in the eyes of history, religious toleration is the highest evidence of culture in a people. Let no Muslim, when looking on the ruin of the Muslim realm which was compassed through the agency of those very peoples whom the Muslims had tolerated and protected through the centuries when Western Europe thought it a religious duty to exterminate or forcibly convert all peoples of another faith than theirs - **let no Muslim, seeing this, imagine that toleration is a weakness in Islam. It is the greatest strength of Islam because it is the attitude of truth.**

Allah (SWT) is not the God of the Jews or the Christians or the Muslims only, any more than the sun shines or the rain falls for Jews or Christians or Muslims **Allah:** Allah is the proper name in Arabic for The One and Only God, The Creator and Sustainer of the universe. It is used by the Arab Christians and Jews for the God (Eloh-im in Hebrew; 'Allaha' in Aramaic, the mother tongue of Jesus, pbuh). The word **Allah** does not have a plural or gender. Allah does not have any associate or partner, and He does not beget nor was He begotten. SWT is an abbreviation of Arabic words that mean 'Glory Be To Him.'**or pbuh:** Peace Be Upon Him. This expression is used for all **Prophets of Allah**. **ra:** Radiallahu Anhu ﷺ (May Allah be pleased with him).

Extremism in Islamic history

Perhaps all firmly held systems of belief, especially those founded on religious conviction, are in some way supremacist: believers are understood to have some special virtue that distinguishes them from adherents of other faiths. But the supremacist creed of the puritan groups is distinctive and uniquely dangerous. The supremacist thinking of Muslim puritans has a powerful nationalist component, which is strongly oriented towards cultural and political dominance. These groups are not satisfied with living according to their own dictates, but are actively dissatisfied with all alternative ways of life. They do not merely seek self-empowerment, but aggressively seek to disempower, dominate, or destroy others. The crux of the matter is that all lives lived outside the law

are considered an offense against God that must be actively resisted and fought.

The existence of Muslim puritanism is hardly surprising. Most religious systems have suffered at one time or another from absolutist extremism, and Islam is no exception. Within the first century of Islam, religious extremists known as the Khawarij (literally, the secessionists) slaughtered a large number of Muslims and non-Muslims, and were even responsible for the assassination of the Prophet's cousin and companion, the Caliph Ali b. Abi Talib. The descendants of the Khawarij exist today in Oman and Algeria, but after centuries of bloodshed, they became moderates if not pacifists. Similarly, the Qaramites and Assassins, for whom terror became a *raison d'être*, earned unmitigated infamy in the writings of Muslim historians, theologians, and jurists. Again, after centuries of bloodshed, these two groups learned moderation, and they continue to exist in small numbers in North Africa and Iraq. The essential lesson taught by Islamic history is that extremist groups are ejected from the mainstream of Islam; they are marginalized, and eventually treated as heretical aberrations to the Islamic message.

But Islam is now living through a major shift, unlike any it has experienced in the past. The Islamic civilization has crumbled, and the traditional institutions that once sustained and propagated Islamic orthodoxy—and marginalized Islamic extremism—have been dismantled. Traditionally, Islamic epistemology tolerated and even celebrated divergent opinions and schools of thought. The guardians of the Islamic tradition were the jurists (fuqaha فقهاء), whose legitimacy rested largely on their semi-independence from a decentralized political system, and their dual function of representing the interests of the state to the laity and the interests of the laity to the state.

But in Muslim countries today, the state has grown extremely powerful and meddlesome, and is centralized in ways that were inconceivable two centuries ago. In the vast majority of Muslim countries, the state now controls the private religious endowments (awqaf أوقاف) that once sustained the juristic class. Moreover, the state has co-opted

the clergy, and transformed them into its salaried employees. This transformation has reduced the clergy's legitimacy, and produced a profound vacuum in religious authority. Hence, there is a state of virtual anarchy in modern Islam: it is not clear who speaks with authority on religious issues. Such a state of virtual religious anarchy is perhaps not problematic in secular societies where religion is essentially reduced to a private matter. But where religion remains central to the dynamics of public legitimacy and cultural meaning, the question of who represents the voice of God is of central significance.

Puritanism and Modern Islam

It would be wrong to say that fanatic supremacist groups such as the al-Qa'ida or al-Jihad organizations now fill the vacuum of authority in contemporary Islam. Though they are obviously able to commit highly visible acts of violence that command the public stage, fanatic groups remain sociologically and intellectually marginal in Islam. Still, they are extreme manifestations of more prevalent intellectual and theological currents in modern Islam.

Fanatic groups derive their theological premises from the intolerant puritanism of the Wahhabi and Salafi creeds. Wahhabism was founded by the eighteenth-century evangelist Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab in the Arabian Peninsula. 'Abd al-Wahhab sought to rid Islam of the corruptions that he believed had crept into the religion. He advocated a strict literalism in which the text became the sole source of legitimate authority, and displayed an extreme hostility to intellectualism, mysticism, and any sectarian divisions within Islam. According to the Wahhabi creed, it was imperative to return to a presumed pristine, simple, straightforward Islam, which could be entirely reclaimed by literal implementation of the commands of the Prophet, and by strict adherence to correct ritual practice. Importantly, Wahhabism rejected any attempt to interpret the divine law historically or contextually, with attendant possibilities of reinterpretation under changed circumstances. It treated the vast majority of Islamic history as a corruption of the true and authentic Islam.

Furthermore, Wahhabism narrowly defined orthodoxy, and was extremely intolerant of any creed that contradicted its own.

In the late eighteenth century, the Al Sa'ud family united with the Wahhabi movement and rebelled against Ottoman rule in Arabia. The rebellions were very bloody because the Wahhabis indiscriminately slaughtered and terrorized Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Interestingly, mainstream jurists writing at the time, such as the Hanafi Ibn 'Abidin and the Maliki al-Sawi, branded the Wahhabis the modern day Khawarij of Islam, and condemned their fanaticism and intolerance.¹ In 1818, Egyptian forces under the leadership of Muhammad Ali defeated this rebellion, and Wahhabism seemed destined to become another fringe historical experience with no lasting impact on Islamic theology. But the Wahhabi creed was resuscitated in the early twentieth century under the leadership of 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, who allied himself with Wahhabi militant rebels known as the Ikhwan, in the beginnings of what would become Saudi Arabia. Even with the formation of the Saudi state, Wahhabism remained a creed of limited influence until the mid-1970s when the sharp rise in oil prices, together with aggressive Saudi proselytizing, dramatically contributed to its wide dissemination in the Muslim world.

Wahhabism did not propagate itself as one school of thought or a particular orientation within Islam. Rather, it asserted itself as the orthodox "straight path" of Islam. By claiming literal fidelity to the Islamic text, it was able to make a credible claim to authenticity at a time when Islamic identity was contested. Moreover, the proponents of Wahhabism refused to be labeled or categorized as the followers of any particular figure including 'Abd al-Wahhab himself. Its proponents insisted that they were simply abiding by the dictates of al-salaf al-salih **السلف الصالح** (the rightly-guided predecessors, namely the Prophet and his companions), and in doing so, Wahhabis were able to appropriate the symbolisms and categories of Salafism.

¹-Abu Zakariyya al-Nawawi, *Rawdat al-Talibin*, 3rd edition, edited by Zuhayr al-Shawish (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1991), 10:316-317.

Ironically, Salafism was founded in the early twentieth century by al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida as a liberal theological orientation. To respond to the demands of modernity, they argued, Muslims needed to return to the original sources of the Qur'an and Sunnah (tradition of the Prophet), and engage in *de novo* interpretations of the text. By the 1970s, however, Wahhabism had succeeded in transforming Salafism from a liberal modernist orientation to a literalist, puritan, and conservative theology. The sharp rise in oil prices in 1975 enabled Saudi Arabia, the main proponent of Wahhabism, to disseminate the Wahhabi creed under a Salafi guise, which purported to revert back to the authentic fundamentals of religion uncorrupted by the accretions of historical practice. In reality, however, Saudi Arabia projected its own fairly conservative cultural practices onto the textual sources of Islam and went on to proselytize these projections as the embodiment of Islamic orthodoxy.

Despite its intolerance and rigidity, however, Wahhabism itself does not bear primary responsibility for the existence of terrorist groups in Islam today. To be sure, Wahhabism and its militant offshoots share both attitudinal and ideological orientations. Both insist on a normative particularism that is fundamentally text-centered; both reject the notion of universal human values; and both deal with the other, however defined, in a functionalist and even opportunistic fashion. But Wahhabism is distinctively inward-looking—although focused on power, it primarily asserts power over other Muslims. This is consistent with its obsession with orthodoxy and correct ritualistic practice. Militant puritan groups, however, are both introverted and extroverted—they attempt to assert power against both Muslims and non-Muslims. As populist movements, they are a reaction to the disempowerment most Muslims have suffered in the modern age at the hands of harshly despotic governments, and at the hands of interventionist foreign powers. These groups compensate for extreme feelings of disempowerment by extreme and vulgar claims to power. Fueled by supremacist and puritan theological creeds, their symbolic acts of power become uncompromisingly fanatic and violent.

The Theology of Intolerance

Islamic puritans, whether of the Wahhabi or more militant varieties, offer a set of textual references in support of their exclusionary and intolerant theological orientation. For instance, they frequently cite the Qur'anic verse that states: "O' you who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians as allies. They are allies of each other, and he amongst you who becomes their ally is one of them. Verily, God does not guide the unjust."¹

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥١)﴾

Wahhabi and militant puritanism read this and similar Qur'anic verses literally and ahistorically, and therefore reach highly exclusionary conclusions. For example, while Muslims may elicit the support or aid of non-Muslims over particular issues when the self-interests of Muslims so require, they may not befriend or share the normative values of non-Muslims. This orientation often demands the performance of symbolic acts, which aim to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims—for instance, dressing in a particular way or marking non-Muslims with distinctive symbols.

Islamic puritanism also often invokes the Qur'anic verse asserting that, "whomsoever follows a religion other than Islam this will not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers."²

﴿وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٨٥)﴾

This verse is invoked in arguing that the theology and rituals of Islam are the exclusive path to salvation. Moreover, a mere testament of

¹ - Qur'an 5:51.

² - Qur'an 3:85.

faith or a general act of submission to God is insufficient to attain salvation in the Hereafter; rather, a person must comply with the particulars of the Divine law in order to qualify as a "true" believer. The puritan trend is thus uncompromising in its rejection of all forms of belief and ritual that do not qualify as the "true" religion of God.

As to the principles that should guide the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims, the puritan trend cites the Qur'anic verse commanding Muslims to fight the unbelievers, "until there is no more tumult or oppression, and until faith and all judgment belongs to God."¹

﴿ قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَنْتَهُوا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ وَإِنْ يَعُودُوا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴾ (٣٩)

Moreover, justifying an essentially supremacist view towards non-Muslims, proponents of puritanism often quote the following Qur'anic injunction: "Fight those among the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) who do not believe in God or the Hereafter, who do not forbid what God and His Prophet have forbidden, and who do not acknowledge the religion of truth—fight them until they pay the poll tax (**jizyah** جِزْيَة) with willing submission and feel themselves subdued."²

﴿ قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ ﴾ (٢٩)

Relying on such textual evidence, Muslim puritans assert that Muslims are the inheritors of an objectively ascertainable and realizable Divine Truth; while Jews and Christians may be tolerated, they cannot be

¹- Qur'an 8:39.

²- Qur'an 9:29.

befriended. Ultimately, however, they must be subdued and forced to acknowledge Muslim supremacy by paying a poll tax. The puritan doctrine is not necessarily or entirely dismissive of the rights of non-Muslims, and it does not necessarily lead to the persecution of Jews and Christians. But it does assert a hierarchy of importance, and the commitment to toleration is correspondingly fragile and contingent. So it is conducive to an arrogance that can easily descend into a lack of respect or concern for the well-being or dignity of non-Muslims. When this arrogant orientation is coupled with textual sources that exhort Muslims to fight against unbelievers (kuffar كفار), it can produce a radical belligerency.

The Place of Tolerance in Islam

The puritans construct their exclusionary and intolerant theology by reading Qur'anic verses in isolation, as if the meaning of the verses were transparent—as if moral ideas and historical context were irrelevant to their interpretation. In fact, however, it is impossible to analyze these and other verses except in light of the overall moral thrust of the Qur'anic message.

The Qur'an itself refers to general moral imperatives such as mercy, justice, kindness, or goodness. The Qur'an does not clearly define any of these categories, but presumes a certain amount of moral probity on part of the reader. For instance, the Qur'an persistently commands Muslims to enjoin the good. The word used for "the good" is *ma'ruf* معروف, which means that which is commonly known to be good. Goodness, in the Qur'anic discourse, is part of what one may call a lived reality—it is the product of human experience and constructed normative understandings. Similarly, the Qur'anic term for kindness is *ihsan*, which literally means to beautify and improve upon. But beautification or improving upon can have meaning only in the context of a certain sociological understanding and practice.

In a further example, as to justice, the Qur'an states: "O you who believe, stand firmly for justice, as witnesses for God, even if it means testifying against yourselves, or your parents, or you kin, and whether it is against the rich or poor, for God prevails upon all. Follow not the lusts of

your hearts, lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, verily God knows what you do."¹

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ
أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا
الْهَوَىٰ أَن تَعْدِلُوا وَإِن تَلُونَّ أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ۝
(١٣٥)﴾

The idea that Muslims must stand up for justice even against their own self-interests is predicated on the notion that human beings are capable of achieving a high level of moral agency. As agents, Muslims are expected to achieve a level of moral conscientiousness, which they will bring to their relationship with God. In regards to every ethical obligation, the Qur'anic text assumes that readers will bring a pre-existing, innate moral sense to the text. Hence, the text will morally enrich the reader, but only if the reader will morally enrich the text. The meaning of the religious text is not fixed simply by the literal meaning of its words, but depends, too, on the moral construction given to it by the reader. So if the reader approaches the text without moral commitments, it will almost inevitably yield nothing but discrete, legalistic, technical insights.

Similarly, it is imperative to analyze the historical circumstances in which specific Qur'anic ethical norms were negotiated. Many of the institutions referenced in the Qur'an—such as the poll tax or the formation of alliances with non-Muslims—can be understood only if the reader is aware of the historical practices surrounding the revelation of the text. By emptying the Qur'an both of its historical and moral context, the puritan trend ends up transforming the text into a long list of morally non-committal legal commands.

The Qur'anic discourse, for instance, can readily support an ethic of diversity and tolerance. The Qur'an not only expects, but even accepts the

¹- Qur'an 4:135.

reality of difference and diversity within human society: "O humankind, God has created you from male and female and made you into diverse nations and tribes so that you may come to know each other. Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous."¹

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾ (١٣)

Elsewhere, the Qur'an asserts that diversity is part of the Divine intent and purpose in creation: "If thy Lord had willed, He would have made humankind into a single nation, but they will not cease to be diverse... And, for this God created them [humankind]."²

﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْكُمْ بِالْكَافِرِينَ كَافِرُونَ كَانُوا أَهْلًا لِلْكَافِرِينَ وَلَكِنْ أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَاهَا مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ لَكَيْفُوسٌ كَفُورٌ﴾ (٩) وَلَكِنْ أَذَقْنَاهُ نِعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرَاءٍ مَسَتْهُ لِيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ (١٠) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (١١) فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ أَنْ يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كِتَابٌ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ (١٢) أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُورٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنْ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٣) فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أُنْزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ (١٤) مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُنْخَسِرُونَ (١٥) أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا

¹- Qur'an 49:13.

²- Qur'an 11:118-9.

كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٦) أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْهُ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَى إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً أُولَئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ مِنْ الْأَحْزَابِ فَالنَّارُ مَوْعِدُهُ فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٧) وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أُولَئِكَ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُولُ الْأَشْهَادُ هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ (١٨) الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَعُودُنَهَا عِوَجًا وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (١٩) أُولَئِكَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءٍ يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مَا كَانُوا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ السَّمْعَ وَمَا كَانُوا يُبْصِرُونَ (٢٠) أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (٢١) لَا جَرَمَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٢٢) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَخْبَتُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٣) مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْأَصْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٤) وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٢٥) أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢٦) فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا نَرَاكَ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَادْنَا بِأَدْيِ الرَّأْيِ وَمَا نَرَىٰ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ (٢٧) قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَآتَانِي رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنُلْزِمُكُمْوهَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ (٢٨) وَيَا قَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَالًا إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدٍ

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ (٢٩) وَيَا قَوْمِ
 مَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٣٠) وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي
 خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي
 أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ إِنِّي إِذَا لَمِنَ
 الظَّالِمِينَ (٣١) قَالُوا يَا نُوحُ قَدْ جَادَلْتَنَا فَأَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ
 كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٣٢) قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيَكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ إِنْ شَاءَ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ
 بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٣٣) وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي إِنْ أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ
 يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُغْوِيَكُمْ هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٣٤) أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ إِنْ
 افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَعَلَيَّ إِجْرَامِي وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُجْرَمُونَ (٣٥) وَأُوحِيَ إِلَى نُوحٍ أَنَّهُ
 لَنْ يُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ آمَنَ فَلَا تَبْتَئَسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٦)
 وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحَيْنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُغْرَقُونَ (٣٧)
 وَيَصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ وَكَلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ قَالَ إِنْ
 تَسَخَرُوا مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ (٣٨) فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ
 يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُقِيمٌ (٣٩) حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ
 التَّنُّورُ قُلْنَا احْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ
 الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ آمَنَ وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ (٤٠) وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ
 مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٤١) وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ
 كَالْجِبَالِ وَنَادَى نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزِلٍ يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَبْ مَعَنَا وَلَا تَكُنْ مَعَ
 الْكَافِرِينَ (٤٢) قَالَ سَاوِي إِلَى جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ

الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُعْرِقِينَ (٤٣)
 وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكَ وَيَا سَمَاءُ أَقْلَعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءِ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ
 وَاسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٤) وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَبَّهُ
 فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي وَإِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنْتَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِينَ (٤٥)
 قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ
 بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنِّي أَعِظُكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ (٤٦) قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ
 أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُنَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ
 (٤٧) قِيلَ يَا نُوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى أُمَمٍ مِمَّنْ مَعَكَ
 وَأُمَمٌ سَنُمَتِّعُهُمْ ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُمْ مِنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٤٨) تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ
 نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ
 الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٤٩) وَإِلَى عَادَ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ
 مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مُفْتَرُونَ (٥٠) يَا قَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ
 أَجَرِي إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٥١) وَيَا قَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ
 ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلَى قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا
 تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِينَ (٥٢) قَالُوا يَا هُودُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِي آلِهَتِنَا
 عَنْ قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥٣) إِنْ تَقُولُ إِلَّا اعْتَرَاكَ بَعْضُ آلِهَتِنَا
 بِسُوءٍ قَالَ إِنِّي أُشْهِدُ اللَّهَ وَاشْهَدُوا أَنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ (٥٤) مِنْ
 دُونِهِ فَكِدُونِي جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنْظِرُونَ (٥٥) إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي
 وَرَبِّكُمْ مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (٥٦)

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ إِلَيْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ رَبِّي قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ شَيْئًا إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيزٌ (٥٧) وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُودًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ (٥٨) وَتِلْكَ عَادٌ جَحَدُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْا رُسُلَهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ (٥٩) وَأُتْبِعُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَلَا إِنَّ عَادًا كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّعَادٍ قَوْمِ هُودٍ (٦٠) وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لَهُ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ (٦١) قَالُوا يَا صَالِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هَذَا أَتَنْهَانَا أَنْ نَعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٌ (٦٢) قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَبِّي وَآتَانِي مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ فَمَا تَزِيدُونَنِي غَيْرَ تَخْسِيرٍ (٦٣) وَيَا قَوْمِ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ (٦٤) فَعَقَرُوهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوا فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوبٍ (٦٥) فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صَالِحًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَمِنْ خِزْيٍ يُومِتُ إِنْ رَبُّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ (٦٦) وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ (٦٧) كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا أَلَا إِنَّ ثَمُودَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّثَمُودَ (٦٨) وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى قَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ أَنْ جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيدٍ (٦٩) فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكَرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً

قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمٍ لُوطٍ (٧٠) وَامْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحَكَتْ
 فَبَشَّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَقَ يَعْقُوبَ (٧١) قَالَتْ يَا وَيْلَتَى أَأَلِدُ وَأَنَا
 عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ (٧٢) قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ
 أَمْرِ اللَّهِ رَحِمَتُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ (٧٣)
 فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبُشْرَى يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ (٧٤)
 إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ (٧٥) يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ
 أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ وَإِنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ (٧٦) وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا
 سِيءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَقَالَ هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ (٧٧) وَجَاءَهُ قَوْمُهُ
 يُهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ
 أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ فِي ضَيْفِي أَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَشِيدٌ (٧٨)
 قَالُوا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا فِي بَنَاتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا تُرِيدُ (٧٩) قَالَ
 لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةً أَوْ آوِي إِلَى رُكْنٍ شَدِيدٍ (٨٠) قَالُوا يَا لُوطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ
 رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَصْلُوا إِلَيْكَ فَأَسْرِ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ
 إِلَّا امْرَأَتَكَ إِنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا مَا أَصَابَهُمْ إِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ أَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيبٍ
 (٨١) فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنْ
 سِجِّيلٍ مَّنصُودٍ (٨٢) مُّسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ (٨٣)
 وَإِلَى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ وَلَا
 تَنْقُصُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ إِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ وَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ
 مُحِيطٍ (٨٤) وَيَا قَوْمِ أَوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ

أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (٨٥) بَقِيَّةُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيفٍ (٨٦) قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ أَصْلَاحُكَ تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ تَتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا أَوْ أَنْ تَفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ (٨٧) قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَرَزَقَنِي مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ (٨٨) وَيَا قَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِي أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ مِثْلُ مَا أَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوحٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ هُودٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ صَالِحٍ وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوطٍ مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيدٍ (٨٩) وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ ثَابِعُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنْ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ (٩٠) قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ مَا نَفَقَهُ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا تَقُولُ وَإِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِينَا ضَعِيفًا وَلَوْلَا رَهْطُكَ لَرَجَمْنَاكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيزٍ (٩١) قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَهْطِي أَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُ وَرَاءَكُمْ ظَهْرِيَّ إِنْ رَبِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ (٩٢) وَيَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَاتَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ وَارْتَقِبُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ رَقِيبٌ (٩٣) وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَأَخَذَتِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ (٩٤) كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا إِلَّا بُعْدًا لِّمَدِينٍ كَمَا بَعَدَتْ ثَمُودُ (٩٥) وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٩٦) إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَا أَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيدٍ (٩٧) يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ وَبِئْسَ الْوَرْدُ الْمَوْرُودُ (٩٨) وَاتَّبِعُوا فِي هَذِهِ لَعْنَةُ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِئْسَ الرِّفْدُ الْمَرْفُودُ (٩٩) ذَلِكَ

مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْقُرَى نَقُصُّهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهَا قَائِمٌ وَحَصِيدٌ (١٠٠) وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ
 وَلَكِنْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَمَا أَغْنَتْ عَنْهُمْ آلِهَتُهُمُ الَّتِي يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
 مِنْ شَيْءٍ لَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ وَمَا زَادُوهُمْ غَيْرَ تَتْبِيبٍ (١٠١) وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْذُ
 رَبِّكَ إِذَا أَخَذَ الْقُرَى وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ إِنَّ أَخْذَهُ أَلِيمٌ شَدِيدٌ (١٠٢) إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ
 لَآيَةً لِمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ الْآخِرَةِ ذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَجْمُوعٌ لَهُ النَّاسُ وَذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ
 مَشْهُودٌ (١٠٣) وَمَا تُؤَخِّرُهُ إِلَّا لِأَجَلٍ مَّعْدُودٍ (١٠٤) يَوْمَ يَأْتِ لَا تَكَلَّمُ
 نَفْسٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ وَسَعِيدٌ (١٠٥) فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُوا فَفِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ
 فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ (١٠٦) خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا
 مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لَمَّا يُرِيدُ (١٠٧) وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ سَعَدُوا فَفِي الْجَنَّةِ
 خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ عَطَاءٌ غَيْرُ
 مَجْدُودٍ (١٠٨) فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِمَّا يَعْبُدُ هَؤُلَاءِ مَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَعْبُدُ
 آبَاؤُهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَإِنَّا لَمُوفُونَ نَصِيبُهُمْ غَيْرَ مَنْقُوصٍ (١٠٩) وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا
 مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَقَضَيْ بَيْنَهُمْ
 وَإِنَّهُمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مُرِيبٍ (١١٠) وَإِنْ كُلًّا لَمَّا لِيُوفِيْنَهُمْ رَبُّكَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ
 إِنَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (١١١) فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا
 تَطْغَوْا إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (١١٢) وَلَا تَرْكَبُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا
 فَيَمْسَكُوا النَّارَ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءٍ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصِرُونَ (١١٣)
 وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفِي النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ
 ذَلِكَ ذِكْرَى لِلذَّاكِرِينَ (١١٤) وَاصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

(١١٥) فَلَوْلَا كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوا بَقِيَّةَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا أُتْرِفُوا فِيهِ وَكَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ (١١٦) وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا مُصْلِحُونَ (١١٧) وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ (١١٨) إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ رَبُّكَ وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

The classical commentators on the Qur'an did not fully explore the implications of this sanctioning of diversity, or the role of peaceful conflict resolution in perpetuating the type of social interaction that would result in people "knowing each other." Nor does the Qur'an provide specific rules or instructions about how "diverse nations and tribes" are to acquire such knowledge. In fact, the existence of diversity as a primary purpose of creation, as suggested by the verse above, remained underdeveloped in Islamic theology. Pre-modern Muslim scholars did not have a strong incentive to explore the meaning and implications of the Qur'anic endorsement of diversity and cross-cultural intercourse. This is partly because of the political dominance and superiority of the Islamic Civilization, which left Muslim scholars with a sense of self-sufficient confidence. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the Islamic civilization was pluralistic and unusually tolerant of various social and religious denominations. Working out the implications of a commitment to human diversity and mutual knowledge under contemporary conditions requires moral reflection and attention to historical circumstance: precisely what is missing from puritan theology and doctrine.

Other than a general endorsement of human diversity, the Qur'an also accepted the more specific notion of a plurality of religious beliefs and laws. Although the Qur'an clearly claims that Islam is the Divine Truth, and demands belief in Muhammad as the final messenger in a long

line of Abrahamic prophets, it does not completely exclude the possibility that there might be other paths to salvation. The Qur'an insists on God's unfettered discretion to accept in His mercy whomever He wishes. In a rather remarkable set of passages that, again, have not been adequately theorized by Muslim theologians, the Qur'an recognizes the legitimate multiplicity of religious convictions and laws. In one such passage, for example, the Qur'an asserts: "To each of you God has prescribed a Law and a Way. If God would have willed, He would have made you a single people. But God's purpose is to test you in what he has given each of you, so strive in the pursuit of virtue, and know that you will all return to God [in the Hereafter], and He will resolve all the matters in which you disagree."¹

﴿وَأَنِ احْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ أَن يَفْتِنُوكَ عَنِ بَعْضِ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَم أَنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَن يُصِيبَهُم بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوبِهِمْ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ لَفَاسِقُونَ﴾

On this and other occasions the Qur'an goes on to state that it is possible for non-Muslims to attain the blessing of salvation: "Those who believe, those who follow Jewish scriptures, the Christians, the Sabians, and any who believe in God and the Final Day, and do good, all shall have their reward with their Lord and they will not come to fear or grief."²

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ تُقِيمُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَيُزِيدَنَّا كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَا أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾

¹- Qur'an 5:49.

²- Qur'an 5:69; 2:62.

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُونَ﴾

Significantly, this passage occurs in the same chapter that instructs Muslims not to take the Jews and Christians as allies. How can these different verses be reconciled?

If we read the text with moral and historical guidance, we can see the different passages as part of a complex and layered discourse about reciprocity and its implications in the historical situation in Mohammed's Medina. In part, the chapter exhorts Muslims to support the newly established Muslim community in Medina. But its point is not to issue a blanket condemnation against Jews and Christians (who "shall have their reward with their Lord"). Instead, it accepts the distinctiveness of the Jewish and Christian communities and their laws, while also insisting that Muslims are entitled to the same treatment as those other communities. Thus it sets out an expectation of reciprocity for Muslims: while calling upon Muslims to support the Prophet of Islam against his Jewish and Christian detractors, it also recognizes the moral worth and rights of the non-Muslim "other."

The challenge most often invoked against an argument for tolerance in Islam is the issue of jihad. Jihad, especially as portrayed in the Western media, is often associated with the idea of a holy war that is propagated in the name of God against the unbelievers. Therefore, jihad is often equated with the most vulgar images of religious intolerance.

At the most rudimentary level, the Qur'an itself is explicit in prohibiting any form of coerced conversions to Islam. It contends that truth and falsity are clear and distinct, and so whomever wishes to believe may do so, but no duress is permitted in religion: "There is no compulsion in matter of faith."¹

¹- Qur'an 2:256; 10:99; 18:29.

﴿ لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴾

﴿ وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

﴿ وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا وَإِنْ يَسْتَغِيثُوا يُغَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴾

Of course, this response is incomplete—even if forced conversions to Islam are prohibited, aggressive warfare to spread Islamic power over non-believers might still be allowed. Does the Qur'an condone such expansionist wars?

Interestingly, Islamic tradition does not have a notion of holy war. "Jihad" simply means to strive hard or struggle in pursuit of a just cause, and according to the Prophet of Islam, the highest form of jihad is the struggle waged to cleanse oneself from the vices of the heart. Holy war (in Arabic al-harb al-muqaddasah **الحرب المقدس**) is not an expression used by the Qur'anic text or Muslim theologians. In Islamic theology, war is never *holy*; it is either justified or not, and if it is justified, those killed in battle are considered martyrs. The Qur'anic text does not recognize the idea of unlimited warfare, and does not consider the simple fact of the belligerent's Muslim identity to be sufficient to establish the justness of his cause. In other words, the Qur'an entertains the possibility that the Muslim combatant might be the unjust party in a conflict.

Moreover, while the Qur'an emphasizes that Muslims may fight those who fight them, it also insists that Muslims may not transgress.¹

¹ - Qur'an 2:190; 5:2.

﴿وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ﴾

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحِلُّوا شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَائِدَ وَلَا آمِينَ الْبَيْتِ الْحَرَامَ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوا وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَا نَقَوْمٍ أَن صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَن تَعْتَدُوا وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾

Transgression is an ambiguous term, but on several occasions the Qur'an intimates that in order not to transgress, Muslims must be constrained by a requirement of proportionality, even when the cause is just. For instance, it states, "Mandated is the law of equality, so that who transgresses against you, respond in kind, and fear God, and know that God is with those who exercise restraint."¹

﴿الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

Despite the prohibition against transgression and the condemnation of unlimited warfare, many classical jurists adopted an imperialist orientation, which divided the world into the abode of Islam and the abode of war, and supported expansionist wars against unbelievers. But this view was not unanimous. Classical Muslim jurists debated whether unbelief is a sufficient justification for warfare, with a sizeable number of classical jurists arguing that non-Muslims may not be fought unless they pose a physical threat to Muslims. If non-Muslims seek peace, Muslims

¹ - Qur'an 2:194.

should make an effort to achieve such a peace. This discourse was partly inspired by the Qur'anic injunctions concerning peace. The Qur'an asserts that God does not prohibit Muslims from making peace with those who do not fight Muslims, but God does prohibit Muslims from making peace with those who have expelled Muslims from their homes and continue to persecute them.¹

﴿ إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمْ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَن تَوَلَّوْهُمْ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴾

Elsewhere, the Qur'an pronounces a stronger mandate in favor of peace in stating: "If your enemy inclines towards peace, then you should seek peace and trust in God."²

﴿ وَإِن جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴾

Moreover, the Qur'an instructs Muslims not to haughtily turn away unbelievers who seek to make peace with Muslims, and reminds Muslims that, "If God would have willed, He would have given the unbelievers power over you [Muslims], and they would have fought you [Muslims]. Therefore, if they [the unbelievers] withdraw from you and refuse to fight you, and instead send you guarantees of peace, know that God has not given you a license [to fight them]."³

﴿ سَتَجِدُونَ آخَرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَن يَأْمَنُوكُمْ وَيَأْمَنُوا قَوْمَهُمْ كُلًّا مَا رُدُّوا إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُرْكِسُوا فِيهَا فَإِن لَّمْ يَعْتَزِلُوكُمْ وَيُلْقُوا إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ وَيَكْفُوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَاخْذُوهُمْ وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأُولَٰئِكُمْ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا مُّبِينًا ﴾

¹- Qur'an 60:9.

²- Qur'an 8:61.

³- Qur'an 4:90. Also 4:94.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ أَلْقَى إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيرَةٌ كَذَلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا﴾

These discussions of peace would not make sense if Muslims were in a permanent state of war with non-believers, and if non-believers were a permanent enemy and always a legitimate target.

The other major issue on the point of tolerance in Islam is that of the poll tax (jizyah) imposed on the People of Book (Christians and Jews) who live in Muslim territory. When the Qur'an was revealed, it was common inside and outside of Arabia to levy poll taxes against alien groups. Building upon the historical practice, classical Muslim jurists argued that the poll tax is money collected by the Islamic polity from non-Muslims in return for the protection of the Muslim state. If the Muslim state was incapable of extending such protection to non-Muslims, it was not supposed to levy a poll tax. In fact, 'Umar (r. 13-23/634-644), the second Rightly-Guided Caliph and close companion of the Prophet, returned the poll tax to an Arab Christian tribe that he was incapable of protecting from Byzantine aggression.

Aside from the juristic theory justifying the poll tax, the Qur'an does not, however, pronounce an absolute and unwavering rule in favor of such an institution. Once more, attention to historical circumstance is essential. The Qur'an endorsed a poll tax as a response to particular groups in Arabia who were persistently hostile to the early Muslims. Importantly, the Prophet did not collect a poll tax from every non-Muslim tribe that submitted to Muslim sovereignty, and in fact, in the case of a large number of non-Muslim but non-hostile tribes, he paid them a periodic sum of money or goods. These tribes were known as "those whose hearts have been reconciled." Furthermore, 'Umar entered into a peace settlement with Arab Christian tribes pursuant to which these tribes

were obligated to pay the Islamic annual tax known as the zakah (almsgiving), and not the poll tax. Reportedly, although they refused to convert to Islam, the Christian tribes contended that paying the *jizyah* (poll tax) was degrading, and instead, asked to pay the zakah, and 'Umar accommodated their request.¹

In short, there are various indicators that the poll tax is not a theologically mandated practice, but a functional solution that was adopted in response to a specific set of historical circumstances. Only an entirely ahistorical reading of the text could conclude that it is an essential element in a Divinely-sanctioned program of subordinating the non-believer.

Final Thoughts

Ultimately, the Qur'an, or any text, speaks through its reader. This ability of human beings to interpret texts is both a blessing and a burden. It is a blessing because it provides us with the flexibility to adapt texts to changing circumstances. It is a burden because the reader must take responsibility for the normative values he or she brings to the text. Any text, including those that are Islamic, provides possibilities for meaning, not inevitabilities. And those possibilities are exploited, developed and ultimately determined by the reader's efforts—good faith efforts, we hope—at making sense of the text's complexities. Consequently, the meaning of the text is often only as moral as its reader. If the reader is intolerant, hateful, or oppressive, so will be the interpretation of the text.

It would be disingenuous to deny that the Qur'an and other Islamic sources offer possibilities of intolerant interpretation. Clearly these possibilities are exploited by the contemporary puritans and supremacists. But the text does not command such intolerant readings. Historically, Islamic civilization has displayed a remarkable ability to recognize possibilities of tolerance, and to act upon these possibilities. Islamic

¹- Abu Zakariyya al-Nawawi, *Rawdat al-Talibin*, 3rd edition, edited by Zuhayr al-Shawish (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1991), 10:316-317.

civilization produced a moral and humanistic tradition that preserved Greek philosophy, and generated much science, art, and socially benevolent thought. Unfortunately, however, the modern puritans are dissipating and wasting this inspiring moral tradition. They are increasingly shutting off the possibilities for a tolerant interpretation of the Islamic tradition.

If we assess the moral trajectory of a civilization in light of its past record, then we have ample reason to be optimistic about the future. But the burden and blessing of sustaining that moral trajectory—of accentuating the Qur'anic message of tolerance and openness to the other—falls squarely on the shoulders of contemporary Muslim interpreters of the tradition.